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C.I.A. Says 4 Million in Soviet Are Doing Penal Labor

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 6 — The Central Intelligence Agency estimates that 4 million people in the Soviet Union are being compelled to undertake some kind of "forced labor." Of that number, 10,000 are said to be political prisoners.

In a study on Soviet penal labor prepared for Congress and made public on Friday night, the C.I.A. said it could not substantiate reports from Europe alleging that such labor was being used on the new gas pipeline from Siberia to Western Europe.

Congress voted a resolution last September asking the State Department to investigate the charges of forced labor on the pipeline. The department responded with a report, the centerpiece of which was the C.I.A. study.

First U.S. Government Report

This is the first published United States Government report on the Soviet system of labor camps, but in 1974 The New York Times undertook its own study because of the publication then of Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn's "Gulag Archipelego," which detailed forced labor under Lenin and Stalin.

The Times study noted that the C.I.A. estimated that 2.4 million to 2.5 million people were in prison camps, but State Department and other experts put the figure at one million.

The new study of the C.I.A. is consistent with its 1974 estimates. It said that 2 million people were confined, 85 percent in "forced labor camps" and the rest in prisons. It said there were now more than 1,100 such labor camps. In 1974, experts put them at about 900.

The C.I.A. said forced laborers work in a wide variety of economic activities, including manufacturing, construction, logging and wood processing, mining, producing building materials and agriculture. The report said more than half of the camps and many prisons engaged in some manufacturing activity.

The total of 4 million people was arrived at, the C.I.A. said, because 1.5

million other convicts have been given probation with "compulsory involvement in labor," which means that they are generally forced to work at construction jobs far from their homes.

And half a million have been paroled from confinement to perform forced labor for the remainder of their terms, the C.I.A. said.

The Reagan Administration has been seeking to discredit the Soviet Union through such vehicles as a news conference to expose purported Soviet attempts to disseminate false information about the West and conferences such as one last month at the State Department on ways to bring democracy to Eastern Europe. The C.I.A. report seems to fit this pattern.

The C.I.A. did not say how it arrived at its estimates, but it has been reported that satellite photos have been used to pinpoint labor camps, and interviews with former inmates have provided information.

The report said that "the Soviet penal system is remarkable for its huge size and its systematic employment of labor." It noted that the Soviet Union has "an ideological commitment to the rehabilitative role of labor in the social adjustment of the individual and accordingly refers to the forced labor camps as 'correctional' labor colonies."

It estimated that under Stalin the camps reached a peak of perhaps 15 million persons in 1947, and after Stalin's death in 1953, the camps were reduced in size, but the numbers began to rise again in the 1960's.

More Convicts Are Not Confined

What is significant about the current situation, the C.I.A. report said, is the rise in the use of convicts who are not confined and work off their sentences on specified construction sites.

"Given the worsening labor shortage in parts of the Soviet Union, this relatively efficient, flexible method of deriving some economic benefit from an increasing crime rate is likely to continue to rise," it said.

On the specific issue of the use of penal labor in pipeline construction, the report said that such workers have been "an integral part of pipeline construction work crews in the Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and the central Russian Republic." They are mainly parolees and probationers and have been used in clearing forests, draining swamps and preparing roads, the report said.

The report said that, in view of the past use of unconfined laborers and the current shortage of labor, "it seems that some forced labor would be used along the export pipeline route for compressor station and auxiliary construction unless the Soviets depart from their usual practice because of the exposure in the Western media."

But in response to the reports from Europe, the C.I.A. said that "large-scale use of forced laborers on the export pipeline is unlikely because many of the jobs require special skills."

The State Department in its summary said that forced labor in the Soviet Union "is a human rights issue of deep concern to the Administration."

"We believe it is crucial that the international community investigate and demand remedial action when confronted with serious charges of violations of international agreements," it said.

Many Perished Under Stalin

Mr. Solzhenitsyn, in his "Gulag" books, and works by other Soviet writers have documented that forced laborers in the Stalin era lived under brutal conditions and a high percentage of them perished in the camps.

The C.I.A. said that in recent years more than 100 camps, or 10 percent of the total, have been involved in construction activities, mostly in Kazakhstan and Central Asia, where the workers are often seen in cities.

About 350 camps are engaged in logging, sawmilling and related activities, it said. And 50 camps are engaged in mineral extraction, "far fewer than in former years when forced labor was extensively used in mining, especially in the Kolyma basin, where gold mining and some lead and coal mining were carried on by prisoners."

There are only about 20 agricultural camps, the study said, and 60 camps devoted to producing building materials such as brick.